

**Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)**

**Minutes
October 19, 2005**

Attending:

RMAC:

Representing

Ken Zimmerman	California Cattlemen's Association
Mike Connor	Public Member
Clancy Dutra	California Farm Bureau Federation
Henry Giacomini	California Farm Bureau Federation
Mel Thompson	California Wool Growers Association
Jeff Stephens	CDF / RMAC Executive Secretary

Members of the Public:

Kenneth Baldwin	BBW & Associates
Tom Hoffman	CDF
Bill Snyder	CDF
Mark Stanly	CDF
Chris Zimny	CDF
Steve Schoenig	CDFA
Tracy Schohr	California Cattlemen's Association

Items 1, 2, & 3, Call to Order and Introductions:

Ken Zimmerman called the meeting to order October 19, 2005 at 8:00 A.M. Introductions of all present were made. He then asked for a review and approval of the August minutes for the Vegetation Management/Fire Focus Group, Water Focus Group and the full RMAC meetings. Corrections were noted and minutes were approved with changes by unanimous vote.

Item 4, CDF review and update of the State Fire Plan. A summary by Tom Hoffman, CDF Staff Chief, Fire Prevention & Prefire Management.

Tom Hoffman began with a discussion of the update of the California Fire Plan (CFP) for which he is responsible. He stated that a group of stake holders was assembled along with a facilitator to guide the process. The group includes USFS, BLM, plus many of the other fire services and land owner groups. Update of the plan is a task assigned by the Board, with the Resource Protection Committee (RPC) providing much of the direction.

Tom Hoffman stated that the existing document (1996) constitutes a revolutionary approach for managing fire policy. It recognized the need to involve other stakeholders and in large part resulted in the formation of the Fire Safe Councils. It was one of the first attempts to use GIS to measure assets at risk, and by matching assets at risk with fuel conditions serves as a tool for deployment of fire suppression resources.

Ken Zimmerman asked if the CFP captures pre fire and post fire conditions. Tom Hoffman responded that it is more appropriate to state that it captures changes in fuel conditions.

Ken Zimmerman raised the issue of managing burned over ground; that post fire presents an opportunity to maintain these landscapes in a more fire safe state; especially in the case of state owned properties. Henry Giacomini referred to Appendix D of the CFP that alludes to the post fire condition. Bill Snyder commented that using areas previously treated by wild fire or planned prescribed treatments is a sound idea, and one that many organizations are struggling with in terms of resources and funding. Treated acres would benefit from a regular schedule of maintenance.

Tom Hoffman responded stating that he is trying to sell his boss on the need for "post fire assessment." Currently CDF conducts a damage assessment which is focused primarily on structures. Resource management should be included in the assessment with structures being only one component. It should include structures that did not burn and why. Mike Connor responded by stating the "resource Management" is the better term. Sometimes resources are actually improved due to fire, including our ability to prevent the next fire within an area.

Mark Stanly commented that we need to redefine the term assets. It includes everything. No houses may have been lost but a watershed has been damaged. Landslides and other damaging events result in high value damage to other assets. Ken Zimmerman noted that following fire the assets always evaluated are structures and not watershed and rangeland resources that are damaged.

Tom Hoffman described the "asset calculator;" a tool used for assigning value to the possible assets at risk subject to damage by fire. This tool was used in formation of the CFP. He recommends that the methodology used in the calculator also be disclosed so that proponents may understand why certain assets (range) receive a low value, and argue for a change.

Mel Thompson stated that he represents the wool growers and would like to see greater emphasis on the use of livestock for post fire management. What is lacking is an official request that grazing be part of the solution to post fire management. Bill Snyder mentioned the new VMP EIR and its use of livestock for fuels treatment. Mel Thompson would like to have a stronger statement from CDF that promotes this form of treatment. Ken Zimmerman noted that herbivory is a service and there

is a cost associated for its use. This distinction must be made for herbivory to be successful. Tom Hoffman asked if there is any plan to capture these thoughts. He would like to have this information. Capturing this information in the minutes is probably adequate. Mike Connor recommended that the Vegetation / Fire Focus Group be used to further explore and expand upon the ideas put forth by RMAC.

Mark Stanly stated that the issue of managing public assets to better protect them from the risk of fire should be elevated at the Agency level. Agencies charged with management of public assets have a responsibility to provide for responsible management that protects public resources from fire.

Tracy Schohr asked the question as to how far down within organizations like CDF does the notion of value to other resources need to go. She cited examples of where ranch infrastructure (fencing) was needlessly damaged during fire suppression activities. From the ranchers perspective there is a huge need for fire fighters to understand that forage and infrastructure such as fencing has value that impacts livelihood. Tom Hoffman stated that he can put Cattlemen's Association representatives in touch with the CDF Fire Academy. If CCA is willing to make a presentation it may be possible to provide this information at a level that will do the most good.

Ken Zimmerman used this opportunity to bring up the need for increased emphasis on resource management in the training of new personnel. Tom Hoffman agreed.

Henry Giacomini stated that ranches managed well are less likely to burn severely. There is an inherent value of grazing, and that message in the CFP should be recognized. The livestock industry should be recognized as an ally to fire fighters. The message should come through the local fire plans. Tom Hoffman believes that he will be able to accommodate that message in the new CFP. Chris Zimny cited the possibility of getting this message to the County Boards of Supervisors and incorporation within their General Plans via the Board of Forestry.

Tom Hoffman provided literature on the CFP that evaluated the performance of the Department in comparison to the plan. He also provided minutes from the last meeting of the CFP Advisory Group. It provides a summary of direction for the new CFP. Mr. Hoffman stated that the '96 plan was probably too detailed. The new plan will most likely include much of the technical information within an appendix. Board policy and objectives are more likely to be emphasized in the main body of the new plan. Much of the discussion within this document comes back to landowner and homeowner responsibility. Mike Connor confirmed that State Parks was not part of the Advisory Committee. RCRC is represented.

Tom Hoffman stated that the current phase is to meet with stake holder groups and agencies that were not part of the Advisory Group. He expects that land stewardship will be a major element within the plan. He identified a significant weakness in the 1996 plan as being a lack of interaction with local county plans and

local permitting, and how that affects wild land and fire. It has not been overlooked but increased emphasis is needed. Collaboration and partnerships is a basis of the 1996 plan and is in agreement with the National Fire Plan.

Ken Zimmerman went to the mission statement and noted that it should have a stronger statement that stresses the protection of natural resources. People often only think of CDF as a fire department and forget that there is a significant resource management component. Tom Hoffman noted that the official mission statement for the CDF does include resource management.

Tom Hoffman provided a summary statement of where the CDF is with this process. After the last RPC meeting in Tahoe the Board Chairman indicated that they wish for CDF to expand upon the themes and direction so that they may elevate the discussion to the full Board. This will give the Board an opportunity to evaluate the direction to date and offer input.

Chris Zimny stated that the Board has indicated a desire to use measurable metrics to evaluate the success of the Fire Protection Program. He expects that this will be included in the CFP.

Ken Zimmerman raised the issue of DFG, Conservancies and State Parks being public properties that also have a land stewardship responsibility, but they are not represented here. Tom Hoffman stated that it came up but was not emphasized by the Advisory Committee. Mike Connor noted that state agencies should have a hammer to enforce good management. There should be some way to manage their lands to improve fire & fuels management. Ken Zimmerman recommended a statement that draws these public landowners into the fuels management process.

Mel Thompson noted that insurance companies should be identified within the CFP as those that derive direct benefit from effective fuels management including that of grazing. Henry Giacomini stated that insurance companies have the power to offer financial incentives for maintaining fire safe open space through grazing.

Ken Zimmerman asked what is meant by the term “adaptive management” found in the document. Chris Zimny commented that it implies the CFP shall have a process that allows for a continuous improvement of the plan and fire protection programs on a regular cycle.

Mel Thompson asked what the timeline was for completion of the CFP. Tom Hoffman was hesitant to provide dates at this point.

Ken Zimmerman asked what Tom Hoffman would like to see from RMAC. Tom Hoffman stated that a copy of the minutes would be most useful and that he will maintain contact with Jeff Stephens regarding RMAC activity. Jeff Stephens recommended that a white paper from the Vegetation / Fire Focus Group would be

of great use to Tom Hoffman. RMAC members agreed to take this up at the next RMAC meeting.

Mike Connor asked how important in the CFP is wildland fire prevention in the broader context of vegetation management? Tom Hoffman responded that technically that is not fire prevention (the prevention of fire ignitions) rather it is fire management. Mr. Hoffman stated that a major theme of the fire plan is PreFire mitigations such as vegetation manipulations that lower cost and losses.

Henry Giacomini asked if the VMP program is included in the CFP or any of the documents before them at this meeting. Tom Hoffman responded no. Henry Giacomini maintained that a huge opportunity may be present to cite the expanded use of VMP as a means to achieve the goals expressed in the CFP.

Henry Giacomini noted that the proposed white paper to provide input to Tom Hoffman may be a distillation of the recommendations RMAC made for the VMP.

Ken Zimmerman raised the issue of a disconnect between PreFire Management and VMP. Jeff Stephens clarified the organization of these two programs. Tom Hoffman explained how PreFire and VMP interface at the Unit level often working within the same chain of command.

Mike Connor spoke in support of data collection for the sake of providing performance measures for the CFP. Chris Zimny responded that he believes this is likely to be required by the Board. Mike Connor clarified that he is referring to what did we prevent versus what actually burned and that it would be key to support future prevention activity. Mike Connor also raised the question as to whether models exist that predict fire occurrence and behavior. Jeff Stephens confirmed that they do exist and cited the Fire Shed Program as an example.

Ken Zimmerman mentioned the Modis program, a model that predicts the spread of noxious weeds, and relates it to cost and benefits of taking preventative action as vegetation changes over time. He proposed the idea that a fire prediction model that predicts fire spread could be linked to a cost benefit analysis in regards to preventing fire. Tom Hoffman found value in the approach. Ken Zimmerman identified the contact person for Modis as Tom Stohlgren (SP), USGS Colorado State University.

Item 5, Update on the Vegetation Management Program Environmental Impact Report. Jeff Stephens, CDF Vegetation Management Program Manager.

Jeff Stephens summarized the progress to date on the EIR. Four scoping sessions have been completed in different locations around the state. There has been one additional focused listening session with the Hills Emergency Forum located in the Oakland hills of the bay area. Two contractors are active on the

project: Common Ground with UC Extension is collecting public comment, and BBWA which is a private consulting firm is charged with writing the document.

Ken Baldwin with BBWA was introduced and offered as a resource to RMAC for information. Jeff Stephens provided a summary of all written comment received to date, and explained that all written comment is available to RMAC upon request. Kenneth Baldwin also commented on past experience with CATS (Californians for Alternatives to Toxic Substances) which is the group that sued CDF on the Jones & Stokes VMP EIR.

Ken Zimmerman called for interaction with CDFA and CDF for writing the EIR due to CDFA ability to apply herbicides during declared pest emergencies. Steve Schoenig commented that CDFA is actually becoming more cautious with herbicide applications making sure that they are CEQA compliant. They still have authority for immediate action when a pest emergency is declared by the Governor. CDFA has been sued by CATS and so far have prevailed in court.

Henry Giacomini expressed concern with CDF being overly concerned with the possibility of being sued again by CATS. Jeff Stephens explained that the court decision is binding and that the deficiencies identified in the judge's ruling must be addressed. Kenneth Baldwin stated that the approach he foresees is to collect as much information as possible on the treatments and then analyze the impact of those treatments. This would include a comparison to the no action alternative. The objective is full disclosure of practices. Steve Schoenig recommended making contact with Dave Bacchi (sp) USFS who is dealing with very similar issues on pesticides. Mr. Schoenig agreed to send contact information to Jeff Stephens for Mr. Bacchi.

Kenneth Baldwin invited comment from RMAC on the type of practices that are being used by the ranching community. He also confirmed that he is communicating with the Fire Safe Councils.

Item 6, Review of Senate Bill 1084: Implications for vegetation management on California rangelands.

Jeff Stephens reviewed SB 1084; legislation that was sponsored by CDF and signed into law by the Governor. This bill changed the Public Resources Code that governs the Vegetation Management Program (VMP). The end result is that CDF now has a clearer mandate to treat a wide variety of vegetation types including timber. The type of treatments has also been expanded to include mechanical, prescribed fire, hand treatments, and grazing. This legislation was intended to be in support of the re-write of the VMP EIR described by Kenneth Baldwin and Jeff Stephens in previous discussion.

Item 7, Agency and Association Reports:

California Department of Food and Agriculture, Steve Schoenig Reporting:

Mr. Schoenig passed out the State Action Plan for the control of noxious weeds. It is a joint effort between CALIWAC, CCA plus other Control Agencies. Nature Conservancies are included as well.

He stated that the next meeting of the Biodiversity Council will be focused on the invasive weeds issue; something which has not occurred before to his knowledge. He further stated that Mike Chrisman indicated plans to redesign the Council to be a "leaner meaner" organization and expects deliverables to be created as a result of Council activities.

It would appear that a new Invasive Species Council will be created. Ken Zimmerman recommended that government take a look at other state Invasive Species Councils that are ad hoc so that it has less of an impact on state bureaucracy.

Steve Schoenig cited the formation of an Invasive Aquatic Species Plan by DFG.

Mel Thompson asked if weed control is a worthwhile task on rangelands. Steve Schoenig responded by saying that random control is not worthwhile; but a focused strategic approach on major species is worthwhile. Government funds that are spent on eradication of small, early infestations are well spent.

Item 7, Committee Reports:

Water Focus Group, Henry Giacomini reporting:

Henry Giacomini directed attention to the 3 tasks that were identified in the Water focus Group meeting of the previous day:

1. If RMAC elects to take on the task of reviewing and promoting statute that has as its purpose to protect and maintain rangeland, and that this effort should be the responsibility of the Rangeland Focus Group.
2. Review the existing Range Water Quality Management Plan in the context of Gaylon Lee's Key Elements document distributed during the Water Focus Group meeting.
3. RMAC take the lead on the advisory committee proposed by Gaylon Lee.

Henry Giacomini called for a motion to accept these three recommendations. Ken Zimmerman asked if it is possible for Neil McDougald to vote by phone at a later time. Jeff Stephens in discussion with Clancy Dutra confirmed that this issue was settled in a previous meeting, and the vote by phone is permitted.

Henry Giacomini made the motion to accept all three recommendations for the Water Focus Group, with the stipulation that Neil McDougald is permitted to vote by

phone on the same motion. The vote was unanimous among RMAC members in attendance to accept the Water Focus Group recommendations.

Note from the Executive Secretary: Neil McDougald was contacted by phone subsequent to this meeting and cast his vote in favor of the motion as stated above. Motion carries with six voting members in good standing.

Henry Giacomini directed discussion to the goals of the Water Focus Group for the coming year. He stated that item two above (a review of the Range Water Quality Management Plan in conjunction with the Gaylon Lee paper) is one of the goals. The second is item three (RMAC taking the lead within the proposed advisory group for non-point source pollution). Henry Giacomini indicated that these two items would be appropriate for the Water Focus Group and constitute a full workload for the Focus Group.

Clancy Dutra noted that RMAC taking the lead on the NPS Advisory Committee is very positive; however, RMAC must have some amount of say with selection of the committee members to avoid a committee that does not function well. Henry Giacomini noted that the participants would come from the scoping meetings conducted by Gaylon Lee. Mike Connor stated that he believes RMAC may add to whatever group that Mr. Lee designates. Clancy Dutra emphasized that his previous experience with the Range Water Quality Management Plan was that the Regional Boards did not buy into the process, and therefore did not fully take ownership in the document. RMAC will be more successful if the Regional Boards are fully involved and take ownership in the finished product.

Clancy Dutra reconfirmed his intent to take the lead pertaining to RMAC's involvement with the Water Board and a rewrite of the Water Plan. Mike Connor suggested that we meet again with Gaylon Lee at the Water Focus Group to solicit more direction and determine the role of RMAC. Mel Thompson noted that Gaylon Lee seemed very approachable and was seeking assistance from RMAC.

Henry Giacomini raised the issue of whether RMAC should meet prior to January on the Water issue. RMAC concluded that Clancy Dutra will question Gaylon Lee and make a determination as to whether a pre-meeting of RMAC is needed prior to the January Board meeting.

Item 8, New and Unfinished Business:

Jeff Stephens distributed travel claim information to the group and explained their use. Jeff Stephens also asked if RMAC wanted a meeting that coincided with the January Board meeting. Ken Zimmerman confirmed that he did want a meeting with the Board so that RMAC may report.

Mike Connor asked if there was any news from the Department on the RMAC recommendations to the Board for VMP. Jeff Stephens stated that the Department

(Bill Snyder, Russ Henley) have reviewed the RMAC recommendations and a draft response has been prepared; however, it is not available for release at this time. Ken Zimmerman spoke with George Gentry who indicated that he would be forwarding any response from the Department upon availability.

Item 9, Public Comment:

None

Meeting Adjourned 12:00 Noon